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AFGHANISTAN

Date: June 2011

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FACT SHEET

Disease Early Warning System (DEWS)

OVERVIEW

Communicable disease accounts for 60 to 80 percent of all outpatient visits and more than half of all deaths in Afghanistan. Consequently, control of communicable disease is one of the highest priorities for the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). In 2006, the World Health Organization, with USAID support, developed the Disease Early Warning System (DEWS) for Afghanistan to reduce morbidity and mortality through early detection and response to disease outbreaks.

Through monitoring sites in all 34 provinces, the DEWS provides accurate and timely information on disease outbreaks and seasonal trends. Investigations result in quick action to mitigate disease outbreaks and prevent epidemics and death. The DEWS also helps coordinate public health surveillance in the field, disseminates public health information, and collaborates with polio eradication and the Expanded Programme on Immunizations initiatives.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

- **Infectious disease monitoring:** Conduct weekly reporting on 15 priority infectious diseases from 260 sentinel sites. DEWS will expand its sentinel sites to reach every district by 2013
- **Outbreak investigations:** Investigate and report on suspected outbreaks
- **Monthly disease control coordination meetings:** Participate in coordination meetings in every province and collaborate with disease control programs such as National Polio Eradication
- **Integrating DEWS with polio and novel influenza A surveillance:** Conduct national-level DEWS coordination and training
- **Logistical support of the reverse cold chain:** Store and transport specimens at recommended temperatures to ensure that they arrive at the Central Public Health Laboratory in good condition
- **Quality control:** Introduce internal standard operating procedures and external quality assurance measures.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Investigated an average of almost eight outbreaks per week which took place country-wide and 96 percent of those outbreaks were investigated within 48 hours of the first report
- Strengthened the surveillance system by increasing the number of sentinel sites from 177 in 2009, to 260 in 2011
- Timely delivery of 99 percent of the reports from sentinel sites arrived to the national lab in the first quarter of 2011
- Conducted H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine campaign that vaccinated more than 170,000 healthcare professionals in Afghanistan against the H1N1 virus in 2010
- Tested 1,255 specimens from different provinces of Afghanistan in the Central Public Health Lab in first quarter of 2011, 704 specimens for measles, 36 for influenza A, 56 for pertussis, 60 for hepatitis and 80 samples for rota virus
- Improved laboratory surveillance capacity of the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL)